

No, You Don't Need to be 'Qualified' to Homeschool Your Children

Over the years, I've heard so many parents dismiss the possibility of homeschooling their children because they don't feel "qualified."

"I'm not a teacher."

"I'm not good at math."

"I wasn't good at X in school, so I could never teach my child that subject."

All these assumptions stem from a fallacy about what education is, and what makes an individual "qualified" to be a teacher.

The fallacy: that your ability to teach relies on your expertise on the topic you're teaching. While that may be true for selling your teaching as a service—you wouldn't make a living teaching a class in a topic you don't understand—it's not a prerequisite for effectively facilitating your child's learning.

Whether or not you hold a teaching certificate is an irrelevant accessory to your ability to teach. To be an effective educator, all you need to be able to do is:

- Use reference resources (like books and Google)
- Find the answers to your own questions
- Foster a sense of curiosity in your children

If you can do those things, you're qualified to be a homeschooling parent.

1. You don't have to know everything. You just have to be able to find the answers to your child's questions.

In most cases, basic Googling skills and the ability to explore *with* your child is all you need to teach your children at home.

Take this as an example: your child is sitting outside in the sun drinking a cold drink, and asks you why the outside of their cup is getting wet.

Your reaction is simultaneously intimidation (*I have no idea*) and interest (*there might be a science lesson buried in this*).

You say, "*I don't know. Let's figure it out.*"

Five minutes and some Googling later, your child has learned about condensation, the dew point, and the effects of a hot entity meeting a cold one.

Your child has the answer. **They have the same outcome they would have received had they asked an expert; they now know why condensation forms on their cold glass.** The only difference is that they got to see your process along the way—which is an asset, not a deficit, because they've learned something about finding answers to their questions, a process they will be required to repeat over and over throughout their lives.

As a parent, your ability to use your Googling skills to teach applies to entire subjects, not just one-off questions. The most common subjects I hear parents express intimidation of are math and science; subjects they often found challenging in school, and don't feel qualified to teach to their children.

With abundant free resources on the internet (such as YouTube and Khan Academy), as long as you know how to find an answer

to a question—which every adult who can Google does—you can facilitate your child’s learning on any topic, whether by finding the answers yourself or by finding resources that can do the teaching for you.

2. One of the key skills children need to develop is the ability to find answers to their own questions

The ability to find answers to questions has always been important, but it’s especially so in the information age. As Einstein said,

“Never memorize what you can look up in books.”

The answer to almost any question that has been answered by man is available at your fingertips. The key to a useful education—one that sets a child up for a lifetime of success—is not memorizing facts, but rather learning *how to ask the right questions*—and then learning how to find the answers.

Einstein again: *“The value of a college education is not the learning of many facts, but the training of the mind to think.”*

This is true not only of college, but of education in general. If your child knows how to think, how to formulate their curiosities into questions, and how to answer those questions, they will be able to learn anything they need to, at any point in time, for their entire lives.

That skill transcends the value of a standardized education—because it’s a skill that can be used to learn anything covered in a standardized education, *and anything else your child will ever want to learn.*

Time and again, I’ve watched homeschool children quickly catch up to and surpass their peers on a given subject or skillset,

because they understand how to adapt and learn.

When you're working with your children to find answers to their questions, you're implicitly helping them build this skill, and equipping them for a lifetime of learning.

3. A child's education is largely predicated on their natural curiosity

Children are naturally wired to learn. The next generation's proclivity to learn is a critical part of our survival as a species, and it's hardwired accordingly.

Every time a child mimics an adult, play-acts the real world (like "playing store"), or asks a question, you're watching this natural wiring in action.

This natural proclivity to learn works to your advantage as a homeschooling parent. All you have to do is nurture it. And homeschooling allows you to do that far more effectively than regular school does.

My first foray into teaching (right after I graduated high school) was instructing writing classes. I worked with both homeschool and public school students, and the difference between the two was startling.

The homeschool students were curious, excited, and fun to work with. I was teaching them how to write fiction, and they didn't require much prompting. I gave them a challenge each week, and that was all the encouragement they needed. I had students practically tripping over themselves each week to show me what they'd written when they were at home in between classes.

Their joy in learning was alive. All I had to do was direct their natural curiosity and let them run with it.

Working with public school students was an entirely different

story. I was working with the full grade range—1st grade all the way into high school—and I saw in stark relief their natural curiosity slowly dying.

The 1st-3rd graders were hungry to learn. The 4th-6th graders required some prodding, but after some explanation and encouragement could start to have fun. But by the time the students hit middle school, their interest in learning was gone. Nothing I tried could make them excited. They were there because they had to be, and they were watching the clock waiting until they could go. Learning had become a compulsory requirement, not an endeavor stemming from desire.

School doesn't foster curiosity; it kills it. With its rules, its rigid structure, its obsession with right and wrong answers, and its punishments for deviating off course, it doesn't leave any *room* for curiosity.

With all that unnatural structure absent, a child's natural curiosity remains intact. And when a child is left to their own devices and allowed to lean into their curiosity, a parent's biggest job is helping to direct it.

Despite common belief, all of this applies to homeschooling your high schooler, too

I've heard countless homeschooling parents say, "*I could never teach my child through high school.*"

Even when someone is convinced of their ability to educate their child through elementary and middle school, high school is considered to be a different beast.

The subject matter is more challenging, the standard requirements more complex, and the level of expertise necessary to answer questions is significantly higher.

In spite of that, you don't need any extra qualifications to homeschool your high schooler. If anything, the resources

available to you are even more expansive than they are for elementary-aged students.

With your child at a comprehension level to use resources like The Great Courses and Khan Academy (both of which were staples of my own homeschooling experience), they're able to engage with entire courses covering the subject matter they're expected to learn—putting less of a burden on you, not more.

And as your high schooler becomes more self-directed, they're able to take on more and more of the impetus of answering their own questions. As long as you're able to support them in finding the answers they're looking for, you're more than qualified to educate your child through high school—and often, high school is the most fun part of the homeschool experience (it certainly was for me).

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